

**Department of Health and Family Services
Office of Strategic Finance**

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Date: September 11, 2002

To: Family Care Pilots and Enrollment Consultants

From: Monica Deignan, Family Care Program Manager
Sherrel Walker, MetaStar Family Care Contract Manager

Subject: HIPAA Compliance When Transferring Confidential Information Between Family Care Agencies and MetaStar

MetaStar, Inc. (MetaStar) is the External Quality Review Organization (EQRO) authorized by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS), Center for Delivery Systems Development (CDSD) to conduct external quality review activities for the Family Care program in the State of Wisconsin. MetaStar reviews Family Care services to evaluate and assess the timeliness, access, and quality of health and long-term care services furnished to Family Care enrollees.

When MetaStar conducts review activities, it is preferable to exchange confidential information electronically. An example of confidential information that is exchanged between MetaStar and a CMO is the names of people whose member-centered plans will be reviewed. Some degree of security has been provided by sending information between CDSD and Family Care agencies in "Winzip" format. This has always been considered an interim solution until the Department makes longer-range decisions on how it will implement HIPAA privacy rules. MetaStar is further along in becoming HIPAA compliant, and cannot meet its own or federal privacy requirements by using "Winzip." In order to be able to continue to exchange information electronically and meet the HIPAA compliance regulations, MetaStar needs to explore alternate ways of exchanging confidential information other than e-mail and "Winzip."

MetaStar, in collaboration with CDSD, is proposing an alternative process for transferring confidential information between the care management organizations, resource centers, enrollment consultants, and MetaStar. MetaStar has an internet-based program that allows information to be "uploaded" and "downloaded" by various sites and is HIPAA compliant. This program is new and will require testing before it can be used by all Family Care agencies. MetaStar plans to begin testing this process with the La Crosse CMO by September 16, 2002. We would like to thank Mary Faherty for agreeing to test this for us.

When the testing phase is complete, MetaStar will begin implementation with the remaining CMOs, RCs and enrollment consultants, beginning with the CMOs. Training will be offered to all sites to ensure a smooth

transition to the new process of transmitting information. Once completed, this should be a user-friendly process for everyone!

Until the new process is implemented, MetaStar will fax and follow-up with a hard copy any confidential information that needs to be exchanged. CMOs, RCs and enrollment consultants can send information, using the Winzip format, to Beth Hadley at DHFS at (hadlebd@dhfs.state.wi.us). You will be notified when you can switch to using the MetaStar website for communications with MetaStar. You will continue using the Winzip format for communications with DHFS until notified differently.

If you have any questions, please contact Beth Hadley by phone (608) 441-8224 or by e-mail bhadley@metastar.com. We appreciate your support as we work together to become HIPAA compliant.